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ABSTRACT

The availability of evening and weekend baccalaureate degree credit courses and factors that discourage institutions from introducing or expanding such courses were investigated through a fast response survey that was sent to a national sample of universities and other four-year colleges. Among the findings are the following: almost three-fourths of the baccalaureate degree-granting institutions offered degree-credit courses in evening or on weekends during the 1979-80 academic year; evening courses were provided most frequently; an estimated 20 percent of all institutions offered enough evening and weekend courses to fulfill all degree requirements in at least one of the 11 major fields of study covered in the survey; for specific fields of study, the proportions of institutions providing all required credits in evening or weekend courses ranged from one percent for home economics to 25 percent of business and management; and next most widely available degree programs were in the fields of psychology and social sciences; opportunities to earn degrees through evening or weekend study tended to increase with enrollment size; and insufficient demand was perceived as the major deterrent to the introduction or expansion of evening and weekend courses (limited faculty resources ranked second as a deterrent, and neighborhood or transportation safety was the least frequently cited factor). Additionally two-thirds of the institutions with evening or weekend courses provided evening classes only, while one-third offered classes both in evenings and on weekends. A sample questionnaire and information on the survey methodology are appended. (SW)

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Access to Bachelor's Degrees Through Evening and Weekend Courses 1980

FRSS Report No. 10

by
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National Center for
Education Statistics

Elizabeth Farris
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In consultation with
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National Advisory Council on
Women's Educational Programs,
U.S. Department of Education

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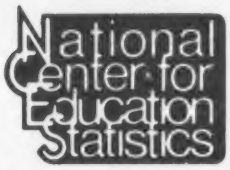

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FOREWORD

This report presents findings of a fast response survey on the availability of evening and weekend courses to students seeking bachelor's degrees. Convenient scheduling of courses offers many potential students their only opportunity to earn such degrees.

During the 1970's, access to higher education was broadened for specific population groups through reductions in former inequities and barriers. However, serious obstacles reportedly still limit degree opportunities for adult learners. One such barrier, inflexible course hours, is of particular concern to those men and women whose daytime responsibilities necessitate their taking all or some of their courses in classes scheduled to fit their needs.

This report is the tenth in a series on issue-oriented data collected through NCES's Fast Response Survey System (FRSS). FRSS surveys are conducted to meet the data requests of Department of Education planners and policy-analysts. The findings are shared with the education community. It is hoped that this report will assist officials in the public and private sectors who are concerned with planning the goals and structure of higher education for the 1980's.

Marie D. Eldridge

Marie D. Eldridge
Administrator

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The survey was suggested by the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs. Joy Simonson, the Council's Executive Director, served as consultant throughout the project.

Russell Garth of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, provided helpful suggestions and background information. The questionnaire also benefitted from the excellent advice offered by numerous individuals in other parts of the Department, institutions of higher education, and professional organizations. Jane Ryland, Project Director of the NCES/SHEEO Network, coordinated the draft questionnaire with representatives of the higher education community.

Westat, a research firm in Rockville, Maryland, conducted the survey and prepared the report under contract to NCES. Elizabeth Farris, Westat's Project Director for FRSS activities, directed the Westat FRSS team, which included John Barton, Debra Cesare, Jo Anne Schneider, and Margaret Mechling.

The NCES Project Officer for FRSS, Jeanette Goor, was responsible for all FRSS activities under the general supervision of David Sweet, Director, and Marjorie Chandler, Deputy Director, Division of Multilevel Education Statistics. Other NCES personnel contributing to the survey or the report included Jean Brandes and Douglas Wright.

The authors acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of these and other individuals, notably the FRSS State Coordinators who facilitated the data collection, and the respondents who voluntarily provided the requested data.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Almost three-fourths of the baccalaureate degree-granting institutions offered degree-credit courses in evenings or on weekends during the 1979-80 academic year.

- Evening courses were provided most frequently. Two-thirds of the institutions with evening or weekend courses provided evening classes only, while one-third offered classes both in evenings and on weekends.

- An estimated 29 percent of all institutions offered enough evening and weekend courses to fulfill all degree requirements in at least 1 of the 11 major fields of study covered in the survey.

- For specific fields of study, the proportions of institutions providing all required credits in evening or weekend courses ranged from 1 percent for home economics to 25 percent for business and management. The next most widely available degree programs were in the fields of psychology and social sciences.

- Opportunities to earn degrees through evening or weekend study tended to increase with enrollment size.

- Insufficient demand was perceived as the major deterrent to the introduction or expansion of evening and weekend courses. Limited faculty resources ranked second as a deterrent. The least frequently cited factor was neighborhood or transportation safety.

INTRODUCTION

Enrollments in institutions of higher education are expected to decrease in the current decade, as a result of the anticipated decline in the traditional college-age population. Projections indicate a 15 percent drop in the 18- to 24-year-old segment by 1990 from its peak in 1981. 1/

Some of this estimated enrollment decline will be offset by increasing numbers of adult, women, and part-time students. During the 1970's, enrollments of older students increased at a faster pace than those of the 18- to 24-year-olds. The greatest gain occurred for women 30 to 34 years of age. Similarly, part-time enrollment grew more rapidly than full-time enrollment. Older learners are likely to become part-time students, while the 18- to 24-year-olds tend to enroll in full-time programs.

Numerous studies of adult learners have identified some of their special educational needs. 2/ A major barrier to earning degrees, reported in many of these studies, is the incompatibility of regularly scheduled courses with daytime responsibilities. Job or family commitments often prevent potential students from attending classes conducted during the prime hours of the day.

The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs requested the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to conduct a fast response survey to obtain an overview of the availability of evening and weekend baccalaureate degree-credit courses, and of factors that discourage institutions from introducing or expanding such courses.

The questionnaire, which was sent to a national sample of universities and other four-year colleges, sought the following information:

- Whether the institution offered evening or weekend baccalaureate degree-credit courses during the 1979-1980 academic year.
- Whether institutions that had no evening or weekend courses planned to offer such courses in the 1980-81 academic year.
- The approximate number of students enrolled in evening or weekend courses in the spring of 1980.
- The approximate percentage of total credits required for a bachelor's degree that can be earned in evenings or on weekends in 11 specified major fields of study. 3/
- The extent to which certain factors discouraged institutions from introducing evening or weekend courses or expanding their number.

The reader is cautioned that, as with all surveys based on samples, the findings are subject to sampling errors that usually are larger for estimates of small quantities.

Appendix I describes the Fast Response Survey System and survey methodology; appendix II presents the survey questionnaire.

1/ Condition of Education, Statistics Report, 1980, National Center for Education Statistics, 1980.

2/ Lifelong Learning in America, An Overview of Current Practices, Available Resources, and Future Prospects, by Richard E. Peterson and Associates, 1979, Chapter Two, Adult Learners: Characteristics, Needs, and Interests, K. Patricia Cross.

3/ These 11 fields represented 83 percent of all bachelor's degrees granted in the 1978-79 academic year, according to unpublished data, NCES Survey of Earned Degrees, 1978-79.

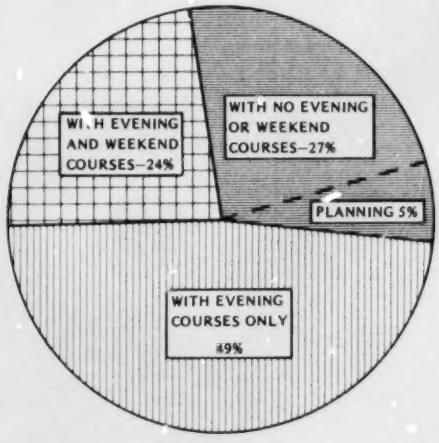
SURVEY FINDINGS

Availability of Evening and Weekend Degree-Credit Courses

Almost three-fourths (1,275) of the institutions granting baccalaureate degrees 1/ offered evening or weekend courses creditable to a degree during the 1979-80 academic year (chart 1). Two-thirds of these colleges and universities offered evening courses only, while one-third provided both evening and weekend courses. A single institution had courses on weekends, but not in evenings 2/.

A slight increase in the availability of evening and weekend courses was anticipated for the 1980-1981 academic year. An estimated total of 95 institutions planned to introduce such courses--in evenings (11), on weekends (64), or both (20).

Chart 1.--Percent of institutions offering or planning to offer evening or weekend courses creditable to a bachelor's degree: United States, 1980



Note.--Percents are based on an estimated total of 1,758 baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

Availability of evening and weekend courses varied according to several institution characteristics, most notably enrollment size (table 1). The larger the institution, the greater its likelihood of having evening or weekend courses. For example, 59 percent of the small institutions (enrollments of fewer than 1,000) had evening courses, compared to 88 percent of the large institutions (enrollments of 10,000 or more). Similarly, weekend courses were offered by only 10 percent of the small institutions, but by almost one-half of the large colleges and universities.

1/ Survey findings presented in this report are based on the 1,758 institutions conferring bachelor's degrees, as estimated from the responses of the sample surveyed. Approximately 11 percent of the 1,980 universities and four-year colleges were theological, professional, or graduate schools that did not grant baccalaureate degrees.

2/ The "Methodology of the Survey" section of appendix I contains a discussion of some of the responses.

Public institutions were more likely to provide degree-credit courses in evenings and, especially, on weekends, compared to private institutions (84 and 68 percent for evenings, and 42 and 16 percent for weekends). The pattern for universities paralleled that of public institutions, while four-year colleges were more similar to private institutions.

Regionally, institutions in the Great Lakes and Plains were the most frequent providers of evening courses (80 percent), while those in the West and Southwest were the least frequent (63 percent). Weekend courses, however, were proportionately most available in the West and Southwest (33 percent).

Table 1.--Institutions offering evening and weekend courses creditable to a bachelor's degree, by selected institution characteristics: United States, 1980

Institution characteristics	Total baccalaureate degree-granting institutions	Institutions offering			
		Evening courses 1/		Weekend courses 2/	
		Number	Percent 3/	Number	Percent 3/
U.S. Total.....	1,758	1,275	73	417	24
Enrollment size:					
Fewer than 1,000.....	643	378	59	64	10
1,000-2,499.....	466	343	74	90	19
2,500-9,999.....	431	361	84	162	38
10,000 or more.....	217	192	88	101	47
Control:					
Public.....	536	449	84	224	42
Private.....	1,222	826	68	193	16
Type:					
University.....	163	132	81	73	45
Four-year college.....	1,595	1,143	72	344	22
Geographic region:					
North Atlantic.....	479	358	75	115	24
Great Lakes and Plains..	531	423	80	113	21
Southeast.....	403	276	68	75	19
West and Southwest.....	345	218	63	114	33

1/ Includes institutions providing evening courses only and those with both evening and weekend courses. Also includes a special case of one institution, weighted to represent three, that provided percents in question 2 without indicating evening or weekend courses in question 1. This case was included under the evening category since all but one institution with evening or weekend courses offered evening classes.

2/ Includes one institution with weekend courses only; the remaining institutions offered both evening and weekend courses.

3/ Percents are based on the number of baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, as shown in the first column.

Note.--Numbers may not sum to totals because of weighting.

Proportion of Degree Requirements in Selected Fields of Study Available Through Evening or Weekend Courses

Despite the general availability of evening or weekend courses, opportunities to earn bachelor's degrees in specific fields of study by taking only such courses were quite limited. Relatively few institutions offered sufficient courses for students to fulfill all degree requirements in any one field of specialization in evenings or on weekends. Opportunities were more widespread for students who rely on evening or weekend classes to obtain only some credits toward their degrees; however, such opportunities were still fewer than those available to daytime students.

Table 2 presents the percent of baccalaureate degree-granting institutions providing each of three levels of opportunities for evening or weekend students to earn a degree in each of the 11 major fields covered in the survey. These levels are defined by the proportion of total degree-requirements attainable in evening or weekend courses: all the required credits; more than 50 percent of the credits; at least some of the credits.

About one-half of the institutions offered some evening or weekend degree-credit courses in five of the major fields of specialization. These most widely supported fields were business and management, social sciences, psychology, education, and letters. The proportion of all institutions offering some courses ranged from 14 percent in home economics to 56 percent in business and management.

The proportions of institutions providing sufficient courses in evenings or on weekends to satisfy higher levels of degree-credit requirements decreased considerably. Across the 11 fields, between 3 and 35 percent of the institutions offered more than 50 percent of the required credits and between 1 and 25 percent provided the opportunity to earn all the required credits during flexible hours. At every level of degree-requirements, business and management was the most widely available field, while home economics was the least accessible.

Not all institutions offer baccalaureate degrees in every major field of specialization even in regular or daytime programs. To put accessibility to a degree through evening and weekend courses in perspective, table 2 also shows the percentage of institutions awarding bachelor's degrees in each of the surveyed fields in the 1978-79 academic year. These data, obtained from the NCES Survey of Earned Degrees, include institutions granting degrees through all institutional programs (e.g., those offered in regular daytime, evening, and weekend courses).

In the field of business and management, the percent of institutions awarding degrees through all programs exceeded the percent making such degrees attainable through evening or weekend courses solely, in the ratio of 3 to 1. In other fields, the ratios were even larger. Across the 11 surveyed fields, the numbers of institutions granting bachelor's degrees ranged from 78 percent for social sciences to 23 percent for home economics.

Table 2.--Institutions offering evening or weekend courses creditable to a bachelor's degree and institutions awarding bachelor's degrees in regular and other programs in 1978-79, by selected major fields of specialization: United States, 1980

Major field of specialization 1/	Institutions 2/ with evening or weekend courses fulfilling:						Percent of institutions awarding bachelor's degrees in regular or other programs in 1978-79 3/
	At least some requirements		More than 50 percent of the requirements		100 percent of the requirements		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Business and management.....	989	56	608	35	445	25	71
Psychology.....	873	50	405	23	267	15	69
Social sciences.....	919	52	412	23	251	14	78
Public affairs and services.....	582	33	282	16	161	9	45
Letters.....	864	49	298	17	153	9	76
Education.....	895	51	314	18	138	8	70
Fine and applied arts.....	718	41	248	14	112	6	70
Health professions..	524	30	151	9	83	5	48
Biological sciences.....	687	39	203	12	67	4	74
Engineering.....	255	15	96	5	66	4	27
Home economics.....	244	14	55	3	18	1	23

1/ Each of the major fields contains a number of subfields; institutional responses for a major field might reflect only one subfield or many subfields. Therefore, the percents of total requirements obtainable in evenings or weekends for each major field represent averages for varying numbers of subfields.
2/ Based on an estimated 1,758 institutions granting baccalaureate degrees.
3/ Unpublished data from the NCES Survey of Earned Degrees, 1978-79, a survey of all the institutions of higher education. Percents are based on the 1,688 institutions that granted baccalaureate degrees in that academic year. On the other hand, the 1,758 baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, used as the basis for presenting the findings of the survey on the availability of evening and weekend courses, is an estimate based on the responses of a small, national sample; this estimate, however, falls within a 5 percent sampling error rate.

Degree Requirements in Major Fields, by Region

Considerable regional variations occurred in the proportions of institutions with evening or weekend courses offering some or all required degree-credit courses in the 11 major fields (Table 3). In a number of the fields, proportionately fewer institutions in the North Atlantic region offered evening or weekend courses than did those located in other regions; however, opportunities to earn 100 percent of the required credits in evening or weekend courses generally were greater in the North Atlantic institutions.

Table 3.--Availability of evening and weekend courses creditable to a bachelor's degree, by geographic region of the institution and selected major field of specialization: United States, 1980

Major field of specialization	Percent 1/ of institutions with evening or weekend courses creditable to a bachelor's degree fulfilling:							
	At least some requirements				100 percent of the requirements			
	North Atlantic	Great Lakes and Plains	South-east	West and South-west	North Atlantic	Great Lakes and Plains	South-east	West and South-west
Business and management.....	65	86	84	74	43	25	38	37
Psychology.....	66	74	67	63	34	19	18	7
Social sciences.....	67	81	70	67	34	12	21	9
Public affairs and services.....	35	52	54	39	14	9	19	9
Letters.....	62	69	71	71	22	10	8	5
Education.....	66	76	74	61	18	12	7	1
Fine and applied arts.....	53	54	57	67	16	6	2/ *	14
Health professions..	37	43	30	58	13	2	4	8
Biological sciences.	47	46	70	58	9	1	9	2
Engineering.....	15	19	23	26	11	3	3	3
Home economics.....	12	18	26	25	3	2	*	0

1/ Percents are based on the number of institutions in each region offering evening or weekend courses: North Atlantic--358, Great Lakes and Plains--423, Southeast--276, West and Southwest--218.

2/ Fewer than 1 percent.

Number of Major Fields Offered, by Selected Institution Characteristics

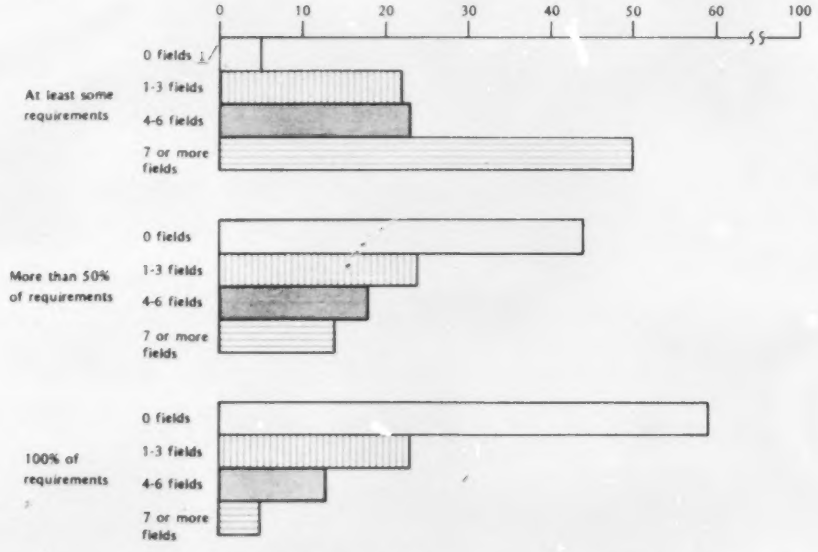
The previous discussion focused on the availability of evening or weekend credit courses in specific fields across all institutions. The access to bachelor's degrees within institutions provides additional insight into the limited opportunities available to part-time or potential students.

Institutions with evening or weekend courses generally offered some courses in at least 1 of the 11 surveyed fields of study; 12 percent offered courses in only one of the fields, and one-half provided courses in 7 or more fields (chart 2).

At higher levels of degree-attainability, both the numbers of institutions providing sufficient courses to satisfy the requirements and the number of fields per institution decreased sharply. For example, about half of the institutions provided some evening or weekend courses in 7 or more fields, compared to approximately 5 percent making all required credits available in so many fields. Additionally, about 40 percent of the institutions with evening or weekend courses offered the opportunity to earn all required credits in at least 1 of the 11 fields. These institutions represented about 29 percent of the degree-granting institutions.

Chart 2.--Percent of institutions offering specified proportions of bachelor's degree requirements in evening or weekend courses, by number of selected major fields: United States, 1980

(Percents are based on the 1,275 institutions with evening or weekend courses.)



1/ Includes institutions offering evening or weekend courses but indicating no proportions of degree requirements attainable in any of the 11 surveyed fields, and also institutions offering courses in other fields specified by the respondents.

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The average number of major fields offered per institution dropped from 5.9 fields in which at least some credits can be earned in evening or weekend courses to 1.4 fields in which all required credits can be obtained (table 4).

As would be expected, larger institutions provided more opportunities than smaller ones to earn required credits at each of the three levels of accessibility. Institutions with 10,000 or more students offered at least some credit courses in an average of 8.7 fields while small institutions (fewer than 1,000 students) offered such opportunities in only 3.4 major fields. Similarly, small institutions provided courses to satisfy all credit requirements in an average of 0.5 fields; the average increased to 2.4 fields in large institutions.

Universities offered some courses in more fields than four-year colleges, as did public compared with private institutions; these differences, however, generally disappeared at the highest level of degree-attainability (100 percent of requirements).

Table 4.--Average number of selected major fields of specialization offered in evening or weekend courses per institution, by selected institution characteristics: United States, 1980

Institution characteristics	Number of institutions with evening or weekend courses	Average number of major fields		
		At least some requirements	More than 50 percent of requirements	100 percent of requirements
U.S. Total.....	1,275	5.9	2.4	1.4
Enrollment size:				
Fewer than 1,000.....	378	3.4	.7	.5
1,000-2,499.....	343	5.5	2.4	1.2
2,500-9,999.....	361	7.5	3.3	1.9
10,000 or more.....	192	8.7	4.2	2.4
Control:				
Public.....	449	8.0	3.1	1.4
Private.....	826	4.8	2.0	1.3
Type:				
University.....	132	8.0	3.5	2.0
Four-year college.....	1,143	5.7	2.3	1.3
Geographic region:				
North Atlantic.....	358	5.3	2.9	2.2
Great Lakes and Plains..	423	6.2	2.1	1.0
Southeast.....	276	6.3	2.3	1.3
West and Southwest.....	218	6.1	2.5	.9

Note.--Numbers may not sum to total because of weighting.

Number and Location of Students Served in Evening or Weekend Courses

Almost 1.4 million students attended evening or weekend credit courses in spring 1980. Table 5a shows the percent distribution of these students by total enrollment size and by other institution characteristics. 1/ Table 5b presents a similar distribution of the institutions serving these students with evening or weekend courses.

The majority of the students served in evening or weekend courses attended the largest institutions. Although institutions with enrollments of 10,000 or more constituted only 15 percent of the total number of institutions offering such courses, they included about one-half of all the evening or weekend students (53 percent).

Two-thirds of all the students attended public institutions, even though these institutions constituted only one-third of all colleges and universities with evening or weekend courses. This discrepancy is explained, however, by the large enrollments of the majority of public institutions.

1/ The enrollment data presented in table 5a should be considered as approximations, since unduplicated counts were often difficult to obtain without considerable effort. (Appendix II contains a discussion of the responses.) Nevertheless, the data, based on the best estimates of the respondents, provide a broad picture of the number and distribution of students served in evening or weekend credit classes.

Table 5.--Distributions within enrollment size categories, by selected institution characteristics: United States, 1980

a. Percent 1/ of students served in evening or weekend courses creditable to a bachelor's degree

Institution characteristics	Total	Enrollment size			
		Fewer than 1,000	1,000-2,499	2,500-9,999	10,000 or more
U.S. Total.....	100	3	9	35	53
Control:					
Public.....	67	2/ *	2	19	46
Private.....	33	3	7	17	7
Type:					
University.....	31	0	0	3	28
Four-year college.....	69	3	9	32	25
Geographic region:					
North Atlantic.....	33	1	3	12	17
Great Lakes and Plains...	36	*	3	1[illegible]	18
Southeast.....	16	*	2	5	9
West and Southwest.....	16	*	2	4	9

b. Percent 3/ of institutions with evening or weekend courses creditable to a bachelor's degree

Institution characteristics	Total	Enrollment size			
		Fewer than 1,000	1,000-2,499	2,500-9,999	10,000 or more
U.S. Total.....	100	30	27	28	15
Control:					
Public.....	35	2/ *	5	17	13
Private.....	65	29	22	11	3
Type:					
University.....	10	0	0	2	[illegible]
Four-year college.....	90	30	27	26	7
Geographic region:					
North Atlantic.....	28	8	8	8	5
Great Lakes and Plains..	33	12	9	8	5
Southeast.....	22	6	6	7	3
West and Southwest.....	17	4	5	5	4

1/ Percents are based on an estimated total of 1,380,369 students; this count may include day students, graduate students, and duplicated counts.
2/ Fewer than 1 percent.
3/ Percents are based on 1,275 institutions with evening or weekend courses.

Note.--Percents may not sum to totals because of rounding.

Factors Discouraging the Introduction or Expansion of Evening and Weekend Courses

Two factors--"insufficient demand" and "limited faculty resources"--were perceived as major deterrents to the introduction or expansion of evening and weekend courses (table 6). For evening courses, one-third of the baccalaureate degree-granting institutions cited "insufficient demand" and one-fourth indicated "limited faculty resources" as major discouraging factors. For weekend courses, the proportion of institutions considering these two factors as major deterrents rose to 50 and 31 percent, respectively.

Institutions that did not offer evening or weekend courses were more likely to rate some of the factors as major deterrents than did those that provided such opportunities. For example, more than one-half of the institutions with no evening courses perceived an insufficient demand for such courses, while fewer than one-third of the institutions with evening courses gave a similar response. Institutional policies/practices also were considered major deterrents to proportionately more institutions with no evening or weekend courses than to those providing such courses.

Despite differences in magnitude of responses, the rank order of major deterrents generally followed a similar pattern both for evening and weekend courses and for the introduction and expansion of such courses. Additionally, the responses by region paralleled the national picture to a large extent.

Table 6.--Major factors discouraging the introduction or expansion of evening and weekend courses creditable to a bachelor's degree: United States, 1980

Factor	Percent of institutions indicating factor as a major deterrent to:					
	Evening courses			Weekend courses		
	Expansion or introduction 1/	Expansion 2/	Introduction 3/	Expansion or introduction 1/	Expansion 4/	Introduction 5/
Insufficient demand.....	35	28	54	50	31	56
Limited faculty resources.....	23	23	23	31	24	33
Limited availability of student financial aid.....	14	14	15	15	14	15
Institutional policies/ practices.....	13	9	26	13	2	16
Difficulty and cost of restructuring and rescheduling curriculum.....	10	9	15	14	9	16
Cost of keeping support services open.....	5	4	6	11	6	13
Cost of keeping facilities open.....	5	3	9	11	10	11
Maintenance of academic standards.....	4	4	6	5	1	6
Neighborhood or transportation safety.....	2	1	2	2	6/ *	2
Such changes in scheduling not under consideration.....	12	4	35	20	5	25

1/ Percents based on 1,758 baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.
2/ Percents based on 1,275 institutions with evening courses.
3/ Percents based on 482 institutions with no evening courses.
4/ Percents based on 417 institutions with weekend courses.
5/ Percents based on 1,341 institutions with no weekend courses. Included are an estimated 15 institutions whose responses to the item on weekend courses were not ascertained.
6/ Fewer than 1 percent.

Note.--The figures in footnotes 2 and 3 do not sum to the total of 1,758 (footnote 1) because of weighting.

SUMMARY

Despite a widespread availability of evening and weekend courses, opportunities to earn a bachelor's degree through evening or weekend study alone are quite limited. While 73 percent of all baccalaureate degree-granting institutions offered some courses in evenings or on weekends, only 29 percent provided enough of these courses to fulfill all degree requirements in at least 1 of 11 major fields included in the survey.

Students in the field of business and management had the greatest opportunities to obtain a degree during flexible hours. One-fourth of the baccalaureate degree-granting institutions provided sufficient courses to satisfy all degree requirements in that field. Other fields with relatively widespread availability included psychology and social sciences.

Students at larger institutions had greater opportunities than did students at small institutions. Almost 1.4 million students were estimated to have attended evening or weekend courses in the spring of 1980. The majority of these students were served by large universities and other four-year colleges.

Although previous surveys of potential students indicated an inadequacy of flexible scheduling to serve their needs, institutions rated "insufficient demand" as the major deterrent to the introduction or expansion of evening or weekend courses. "Limited faculty resources" was the second most frequently mentioned major deterrent.

APPENDIX I

The Fast Response Survey System

The Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) was established by NCES so that education data, urgently needed for planning and policy formulation, could be collected quickly and with minimum burden on respondents.

The FRSS covers six education sectors:

State education agencies (SEA's)

Local education agencies (LEA's)

Public elementary and secondary schools

Nonpublic elementary and secondary schools

Institutions of higher education

Noncollegiate postsecondary schools with occupational programs

All 50 States and the District of Columbia are included in the SEA sector. For each of the other sectors, a stratified random sample was designed to allow valid national estimates to be made. The sample sizes range from 500 to 1,000.

A data-collection network involving both respondents and coordinators was developed in each sector. Coordinators assist in the data collection by maintaining liaison with the sampled institutions or agencies. The respondents, selected to report for their institutions or agencies, voluntarily provide the policy-oriented data requested in the questionnaires.

The Fast Response Survey System provides NCES with a mechanism for furnishing data quickly and efficiently. All aspects of the system--the sample design, the network of coordinators and respondents, and the short questionnaires--have been designed with this end in mind.

Methodology of the Survey of Institutions of Higher Education on the Availability of Evening and Weekend Baccalaureate Degree-Credit Courses

The national sample used in this survey was a modification of the FRSS sample of institutions of higher education that had been drawn in 1975. The original sample of 502 institutions was stratified by enrollment size, type, and control. Since the survey concerned baccalaureate degree-credit courses, two-year institutions were out-of-scope. Eliminating two-year colleges and institutions that had closed since 1975 reduced the sample to 317. In order to increase the reliability of estimates, the reduced sample was supplemented by 75 institutions. Supplementation occurred in the two smallest-sized strata to augment the representation of institutions of these sizes.

Questionnaires were mailed to respondents in May 1980. Data collection continued until a 92 percent response (359 questionnaires) was obtained.

The response data were weighted to produce national estimates, and a weight adjustment was made to account for survey nonresponse. The weights were calculated for each cell of a two-way tabulation of total enrollment size and control, as obtained from the 1979-80 Opening Fall Enrollment Survey, NCES. Table A shows cell and marginal totals used in the weighting.

The findings presented in this report should be regarded as preliminary data on degree-availability through evening and weekend study. The structure of the Fast Response Survey System--short (one-page) questionnaires and minimum response burden--precluded an in-depth exploration of the topic. Some cautions about interpreting the findings are given below.

Institutions' responses to question 1a (whether evening or weekend courses were offered in the 1979-80 academic year) reflected varying interpretations of evening and weekend courses. The definition in the questionnaire specified courses scheduled in evenings or on weekends "primarily for the benefit of students who cannot attend weekday daytime classes." Some institutions included courses that were an extension of daytime classes; although these courses were not designed specifically for students who could not attend daytime classes, the courses were available to such students. Other institutions interpreted the definition more literally and responded that they had no evening or weekend courses. Consequently, the figures probably overestimate the number of institutions with evening or weekend courses designed primarily for students who cannot attend daytime classes, but underestimate the number of institutions offering any evening or weekend courses.

Spring 1980 enrollments in evening or weekend courses should be regarded as broad estimates. To minimize response burden, the questionnaire requested approximate numbers rather than actual counts. The figures given may have included graduate students, students enrolled in the daytime program who were taking evening or weekend courses, and duplicated counts of students taking more than one course. In addition, weighting these estimates added to the impreciseness of the figures. Nevertheless, the data may be useful as a broad indication of the magnitude of evening and weekend enrollment and its distribution.

Obtaining data on the percent of degree requirements available through evening or weekend courses presented several difficulties as well. Because of space limitations, summary percents were requested for major fields rather than subfields. The number of subfields offered by institutions varied greatly and were differentially available, thereby complicating the estimation process. Further, course offerings fluctuated from semester to semester, and most institutions did not maintain centralized records of their evening or weekend offerings. To get detailed calculations of percents for each major field would have required a respondent burden beyond the scope of an FRSS survey. Therefore, the percents that were obtained were average estimates for an undetermined number of subfields. Future studies of degree availability in evening or weekend courses might focus on individual subfields.

Table A.--Universe of universities and other four-year colleges, by enrollment size and control

Total enrollment size	Total	Control	
		Public	Private
Total.....	1,980	558	1,422
Fewer than 1,000.....	827	33	794
1,000-2,499.....	502	98	404
2,500-4,999.....	237	115	122
5,000-9,999.....	197	130	67
10,000-19,999.....	140	113	27
20,000 or more.....	77	69	8

Standard Errors of the Statistics

The findings presented in this report are estimates based on a sample of institutions and, therefore, are subject to sampling variability. If the questionnaire had been sent to a different sample, the responses would not have been identical: some figures might have been larger, while others might have been smaller. The standard error of a statistic (an estimate of the sampling variation of the statistic) is used to estimate the precision of the statistic obtained from a particular sample. Intervals of 1.645 standard errors below to 1.645 standard errors above a given statistic would include the average of the statistic in approximately 90 percent of all possible samples of the same size. An interval computed in this way is called a 90 percent confidence interval.

Table B presents coefficients of variation for selected questionnaire items. The coefficient of variation, a measure of relative error, is obtained by dividing the standard error of the estimate by the estimate. For example, an estimated 989 institutions offered some required courses in the field of business and management in evenings or on weekends, and the coefficient of variation is .05. The standard error of this estimate is 49 (989 times .05), and the 90 percent confidence interval is 989 $\pm$ 81 (989 $\pm$ 1.645 times 49). Therefore, in at least 90 percent of all possible samples, between 908 and 1,070 institutions would indicate that they provided at least some degree requirements in business and management.

Table B.--Coefficients of variation for proportion of degree requirements, by major field of specialization

Major field of specialization	At least some requirements		More than 50 percent of requirements		100 percent of requirements	
	Estimate	c.v.	Estimate	c.v.	Estimate	c.v.
Business and management.....	989	.05	608	.09	445	.11
Psychology.....	873	.06	405	.10	267	.13
Social studies.....	919	.06	412	.11	251	.16
Public affairs and services..	582	.09	282	.13	161	.20
Letters.....	864	.07	298	.12	153	.15
Education.....	895	.08	314	.11	138	.24
Fine and applied arts.....	718	.08	248	.17	112	.24
Health professions.....	524	.09	151	.18	83	.22
Biological sciences.....	687	.08	203	.19	67	.28
Engineering.....	255	.10	96	.21	66	.29
Home economics.....	244	.11	55	.24	18	.33

APPENDIX II
REPRODUCTION OF SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Fast Response Survey System

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

Form approved
FEDAC No. S 21
App. Exp. 11/81

SURVEY OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION ON AVAILABILITY OF EVENING AND WEEKEND BACCALAUREATE DEGREE-CREDIT COURSES

This report is authorized by law (20 U.S.C. 1221e-1). While you are not required to respond, your cooperation is needed to make the results of this survey comprehensive, accurate and timely.

DEFINITION: Evening or weekend baccalaureate degree-credit courses are those scheduled evenings and/or weekends primarily for the benefit of students who cannot attend weekday daytime classes.

	Evening		Weekends	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1.a. Did your institution offer evening or weekend baccauaureate degree-credit courses during the 1979-80 academic year?.....1.a				
b. If "no" to either, does your institution plan to offer such courses during the 1980-81 academic year?.....1.b				

c. If "yes" checked in either column on line 1.a, estimate the approximate number of students enrolled in evening or weekend courses in spring 1980.
Number (unduplicated count): ____

2. For each major field of study, enter in the table below the approximate percentage of total credits required for a bachelor's degree that can be earned evenings or weekends; if no credits can be earned evenings or weekends, enter a "zero."

If the percentages for important subfields differ substantially from those of the major fields, provide information for them in the blank lines under "exceptions," referencing the HEGIS code. Example: 1200 Nursing (With percentage entry)

Major field of study	%	Major field of study (continued)	%
HEGIS code		HEGIS code	
0400 Biological sciences		2100 Public affairs & services	
0500 Business & management		2200 Social sciences	
0800 Education		Other fields with evening/ weekend courses (specify):	
0900 Engineering			
1000 Fine & applied arts			
1200 Health professions			
1300 Home economics		Important subfield exceptions:	
1500 Letters (Eng., lit., lingu., philo.)			
2000 Psychology			

3. To what extent do each of the following reasons discourage your institution from introducing, or expanding the number of, evening and weekend baccalaureate degree-credit courses? For each reason, check the extent for both evening and weekend courses.

Reason	Extent of discouragement					
	Evening courses			Weekend courses		
	Major	Moderate	Little or none	Major	Moderate	Little or none
a. Insufficient demand						
b. Limited availability of student financial aid						
c. Limited faculty resources						
d. Difficulty and cost of restructuring and rescheduling curriculum						
e. Institutional policies/practices (e.g., residence or course load requirements, time limits)						
f. Maintenance of academic standards						
g. Cost of keeping facilities open						
h. Cost of keeping support services open (e.g., libraries, health counseling)						
i. Neighborhood or transportation safety						
j. Other (specify)						
k. Such changes in scheduling not under consideration						

Respondent: Name / Title — Telephone (include area code)

Institution — State — Date

NCES Form No. 2J-1-10, 5/80